



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Template Version 2.09

Voluntary Report - public distribution

Date: 1/14/2005

GAIN Report Number: IT5001

Italy

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

Italy Inaugurates its National Food Safety Committee

2005

Approved by:

Ann Murphy
U.S. Embassy

Prepared by:

Alberto Menghini

Report Highlights:

Italian ministers of agriculture and health inaugurated a new inter-ministerial National Food Safety Committee December 23, 2004. The committee will act as national counterpart to the European Food Safety Authority as mandated by EU Regulation 178/2002.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Rome [IT1]
[IT]

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Background	3
Mission and objectives of the Committee	3
Organization of the Committee	4
The scientific advisory board	4
Comments	5

Executive Summary

Italian Ministers Gianni Alemanno (Agriculture) and Girolamo Sirchia (Health) inaugurated in Rome the newly created National Food Security Committee (NFSC) 23 December 2004. The new committee will act as national counterpart to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

Background

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was established in 2002 (by Chapter III of EU Regulation 178/2002) to develop risk assessments and communicate that information to the Commission and the public (for further details on EFSA see Gain report E23231). On December 13, 2003, the European Council decided on the Italian city of Parma as the European Food Safety Authority's permanent location.

The same regulation establishing EFSA states in Article 22 that “it shall act in close cooperation with the competent bodies in the Member States carrying out similar tasks to these of the Authority” and that “the Authority, Commission and Member States shall cooperate to promote the effective coherence between risk assessment, risk management and risk communication functions.”

After approval of regulation 178/2002 and intense political debate in Italy over the “competent body”, two main positions emerged. Some of the leading farmers' organizations and the food industry organization called for the creation of a dedicated food safety authority from scratch, with independent budget, newly-hired staff and physical location separate from the existing institutions. A draft law for the creation of a new national food safety authority was under scrutiny by the AgCommittees (in both chambers) of Parliament. Numerous Italian cities volunteered to host the national food safety authority. This was the first proposal.

The Government of Italy on the other hand took a different approach. The government decided to create an inter-ministerial food safety committee using existing financial and human resources rather than creating new structures. The proposal was justified by the need to avoid new budget expenditure and new bureaucratic burdens.

Despite some resistance from some agricultural groups, Ministers of Agriculture (Mr Alemanno) and Health (Dr Sirchia) agreed upon the creation of the new National Food Safety Committee (NFSC) in June 2004. The new committee formally started operations December 23, 2004.

Mission and Objectives of the Committee

The mission of NFSC is to “promote and coordinate the definition of consistent methods for food risk assessment. The Committee, with the help of the scientific board and of groups of experts appointed ad hoc, will also produce scientific recommendations on food safety issues.”

The objectives of the Committee will be:

- To ensure smooth interaction with EFSA;
- To promote and supervise the definition of consistent methods for food risks assessments;
- To propose methodologies to design monitoring and surveillance plans: a) for inspection and control of food products; b) to verify that food safety and biotechnology regulations are implemented properly.
- To supervise food safety surveillance activity and communicate its results.

The topics to be analyzed by NFSC are proposed by its Chair and Vice-chair on the basis of the activities of EFSA and of other similar institutions in other EU member states.

Organization of the Committee

The National Food Safety Committee is appointed by the Italian Minister of Health, who also serves as Chair. The committee is composed of eight members that serve for four years.

They are:

- a Chair (Minister of Health),
- a Vice-chair proposed by the Minister of Agriculture,
- 2 members proposed by the two ministers,
- 4 members proposed by the regions and the autonomous provinces

The current composition of NFSC is as follows:

Chairman – Dr. Girolamo Sirchia - Minister of Health

Vice-chairman – Giuseppe Ambrosio - Ministry of Agriculture

Mr Matteo Antonicelli – Apulia Region

Mr Maurizio Ceci – Emilia Romagna Region

Prof Franco Contaldo – University of Naples, Campania Region

Mr Romano Marabelli – Ministry of Health

Mr Giovanni Monastra – National Research Institute For Food And Nutrition

Mr Giovanni Vincenzi – Veterinary Services, Veneto Region

The scientific advisory board

The National Food Safety Committee takes the advice of a Scientific Advisory Board and, if needed, of additional groups of experts. There are 12 members sitting on the scientific board, of which:

- A Chair and a member proposed by the Minister of Health,
- 2 members proposed by the Minister of Agriculture,
- 6 members proposed by the regions and the autonomous provinces,
- The chair of the National Research Institute For Food And Nutrition,
- The president of the National Reference Laboratory

The topics covered by the scientific board are:

- Food additives, flavorings, ingredients, packaging, etc
- Feed and feed additives
- Safety of plant products, pesticides and residues
- Genetically modified organisms
- Organic products
- Special products, allergies and human nutrition
- Residues and contaminants in the food chain
- Animal health and welfare
- Production, processing, conservation, packaging and transportation of food products.

The Scientific Advisory Board is currently composed of the following members:

Prof. Vittorio Silano - President – Ministry of Health

Prof. Antonio Boccia – University of Rome “La Sapienza”

Dott. Cesare Bonacina – Director Official Laboratory Lombardia and Emilia Romagna

Dr. Nazareno Renzo Brizioli - Director Official Laboratory Lazio and Toscana

Dott. Claudio Carmelo Castiglione - Official Laboratory Sicily

Dott. Giuseppe D’agrosa - Basilicata Region

Prof. Enrico Garaci – President, National Official Reference Laboratory

Prof. Aldo Martelli - University of West Piedmont

Dott.ssa Giulia Morosetti – Autonomous Province of Bolzano

Dott. Luigi Quaglieri - Abruzzo Region

Prof. Ferdinando Romano – President, National Research Institute For Food And Nutrition

Prof. Andrea Strata – University of Parma

Comments

The inauguration of the National Food Safety Committee received very little Italian press coverage. None of the major opponents of the idea of creating a committee instead of an authority made official statements.

Only the green party commented negatively on the creation of the new committee through its spokesperson, who said that the committee does not provide sufficient guarantees for Italian consumers and that this solution is not in line with what was requested by EU Regulation 178/2002.